

# DFEH News Brief

February 6, 2003

## **ESTATE OF POSTAL WORKER KILLED FOLLOWING JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER SHOOTINGS AWARDED MAXIMUM IN STATE HATE VIOLENCE CASE**

Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH) Director Dennis Hayashi today announced that the estate of Joseph Santos Iletto, the United States postal carrier killed following a 1999 shooting spree at a Los Angeles area Jewish community center, was awarded \$150,000 by the Fair Employment and Housing Commission (FEHC) in a hate violence case brought by the Department. Buford Furrow, Jr., the gunman convicted of shooting Iletto and five others, was also ordered to pay the estate an additional \$25,000 in civil penalties. The announcement was made at a press conference held at the Asian Pacific American Legal Center in Los Angeles. Ismael Iletto, brother of the victim, spoke on behalf of the family.

Iletto, 39 years old and a naturalized U.S. citizen of Filipino descent, was delivering mail in Chatsworth, California, on August 10, 1999, when he was approached by Furrow. Minutes before, Furrow had shot five people, including three children, at the North Valley Jewish Community Center in Granada Hills as part of a racially and religiously motivated crime spree. After asking Iletto to mail a letter for him, Furrow pulled a handgun and fired nine shots, all nine hitting Iletto who died at the scene.

The award is the maximum amount the Commission can grant under California law. "Mr. Iletto was singled out solely because he was a non-white, uniformed federal employee," Hayashi said. "This young man's life was taken from him and his family for no other reason than one man's view of who should or should not be entitled to live and work in this country. It is not possible to adequately compensate Mr. Iletto's family for the pain and suffering they have endured as a result of this tragedy. The maximum amount allowed by California hate violence statutes is fully justified in this case."

The FEHC found that Furrow discriminated against Iletto because of his race, color, national origin and ancestry, and ordered Furrow to pay Iletto's estate \$150,000 in actual damages for the victim's emotional distress and \$25,000 as a civil penalty for the unlawful hate violence committed against Iletto. Furrow is currently serving two consecutive life terms plus 110 years at the Marion Federal Prison in Marion, Illinois, and has the right to appeal the Commission's decision.

California's *Ralph Civil Rights Act*, Civil Code section 51.7, forbids violence or threats of violence because of a person's race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, political affiliation or position in a labor dispute. Prohibited acts include verbal or written threats, physical assault or attempted assault, graffiti, vandalism or property damage. Remedies available to victims include restraining orders, damages for the cost of medical treatment, lost wages, property repair, and emotional distress and suffering, civil penalties, attorney fees. A court may also the perpetrator to pay punitive damages.

More information about the Ralph Act can be obtained under "Statutes and Laws" on this website or by calling DFEH at (800) 884-1684.

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